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Commission on Population and Development
Forty-ninth session
11-15 April 2016
Item 4 of the provisional agenda[1]
General debate on national experience in population matters: "Strengthening the demographic evidence base for the post-2015 Development agenda"

Statement submitted by International Federation on Ageing (IFA) and AARP, HelpAge International, International Federation on Ageing, International Longevity Center Global Alliance, Ltd., International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council[2]

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[1] E/CN.9/2016/1.
[2] The present statement is issued without formal editing.

15-17825 (E) 180116

Please recycle

Statement

The International Federation on Ageing (IFA) and organizations within the Stakeholder Group on Ageing appreciate the opportunity to address the agenda of the Commission on Population and Development on "Strengthening the demographic evidence base for the post-2015 development agenda". As an international non-governmental organization (NGO) whose membership base comprises governments, NGOs, industry, academia and individuals, the IFA is a leader in examining and synthesizing emerging trends and issues that target the ageing population. Together the IFA and the Stakeholder Group on Ageing represent the interests of 800 million older persons globally.

The Commission on Population and Development (CPD) creates an opportunity for governments to develop policies and programmes for their populations based on demographic trends and shifts. With the projected increase of people aged 60 years and over, according to The United Nations Population Division[1], to reach 2.1 billion by 2050, the United Nations has recognized the urgency of responding to older persons as the world's fastest growing population group. About 80 per cent of all older persons are currently living in low- and middle-income countries and over 23 per cent of the world's women are fifty years and above. Due to the scale and speed of population ageing, the CPD should devote time in its agenda to review population ageing and its impact on societies moving forward.

Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development embeds Member State commitment to 'leave no one behind' and commits to Sustainable Development Goals and targets that must be inclusive of all age, social and economic groups. We recall the commitment that 'no goal or target be considered met unless met for all social and economic groups'.[2] While we welcome this commitment, there are a range of critical areas to be addressed in the indicators to measure achievement of the goals and targets, and to realise the promise of fully disaggregating data by sex, age, disability, location and other parameters identified. Improving the quality of data as well as its full disaggregation is imperative in determining how all goals will be achieved.

Disaggregation is more than just a technical discussion. It goes to the heart of the human rights approach to achieve universality and leave no one behind. Even though there are references to older people and age in the proposed targets, the approach to disaggregate by age throughout the life course must be especially robust and reliable and address any underlying assumptions that may lead to a misrepresentation of data. In order to strengthen the evidence associated with demographic shifts, all current and future population data sets must be assessed, developed and managed across the lifespan.

The CPD informs governments of the facts and implications of major demographic shifts. If the post-2015 development agenda is to be "inclusive of all", it is vital to prioritize the number, location, living conditions contributions and

[1] United Nations Population Division, World Population Ageing 2015 Highlights, ST/ESA/SER.A/368. Available at: http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/ageing/WPA2015_Highlights.pdf.

[2] Synthesis Report of the Secretary General on the Posto-2015 Agenda.

needs of older people. Older persons must be given recognition and support to lead healthy and dignified lives to maximise their capacities, skills and abilities.

The WHO World Report on Ageing and Health[3] comprehensively and carefully analysed evidence on a global basis to address population ageing and associated demographic changes such as globalization and urbanization.

To leave no one behind means to be able to measure, monitor and refine policy to be inclusive of older persons through the principles of human rights, equity and non-discrimination. Gaps on age data must be filled and action taken to remove age caps on the data that is collected. These principles should be reaffirmed by the Commission on Population and Development for full compliance by all organizations of the United Nations system to ensure they are inclusive of all.

Specific suggestions on organization and methods of work of the Commission on Population and Development are as follows:

1. The CPD should give attention to population ageing early on in its plenary, its informal consultation processes and reporting mechanisms, so that the existing knowledge can enlighten all work going forward relative to the SDGs and the Programme of Action of ICPD.

2. The CDP should ensure that there are representatives of civil society in the sessions of the Commission on Population Development that cover the lifespan.

3. The CPD should ensure that civil society organizations representing older persons are included in those invited to make oral interventions.

[3] World Health Organization (2015), World Report on Ageing and Health. Available at http://who.int/ageing/consulatation/en/.

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Statement submitted by FEMM, a non-governmental organizations in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council[2]

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Statement

The Fertility Education & Medical Management (FEMM) Foundation is a knowledge-based health programme for women inspired by women's right to be informed participants in their own healthcare and to make voluntary decisions based on options, information, and understanding. The Foundation is dedicated to health education, medical research, and improving reproductive health care to advance women's health.

Due to this mission, FEMM understands the importance of good data. It is impossible to implement or assess effective, relevant, and appropriate policies without clear information about what people actually need. As an organization serving women's reproductive health needs, FEMM is working to address critical knowledge gaps that prevent women from understanding their bodies and achieving the highest attainable standard of health. This is essential for achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3, Health for all. Health, in turn, impacts women's educational and professional achievements and personal lives, which relate to SDGs 4 and 5.

Women and girls comprise approximately half the population of the world, but remain more vulnerable to health problems due to both biological and social reasons. Women also often accept as normal symptoms irregular bleeding, pain, depression, mood swings, and weight gain, and do not realize that these are often signs of underlying hormonal imbalances and abnormalities. Even when women do seek medical care, most health care providers and programmes struggle to diagnose them and often can only treat the symptoms. These underlying conditions can affect women and girls' long-term overall health, sometimes irreversibly.

In order to address this need, FEMM has identified not only better ways to diagnose and treat women, but also ways to help women to be informed participants in their own healthcare. Few women understand how to identify signs of health such as ovulation (only 3 per cent of women worldwide can identify it) or abnormalities in their menstrual cycles. Many women also do not understand the delicate interplay of hormones necessary for good health.

FEMM provides women's education about their bodies to enable them to make informed choices about their health care. Informed consent involves a choice made voluntarily with information and understanding about the various treatment options and is a bedrock principle of medical care and ethics. To make an informed choice, women must be informed during family planning counselling about how their bodies work, how to maintain good health, how various family planning methods affect their bodies, and how soon after discontinuing family planning, they might become pregnant again. FEMM education enables women to make truly informed choices. This also helps women to make choices in other areas of their lives, such as employment and family life.

A woman who understands how her body works can monitor her health and seek help when needed. FEMM knows that hormones are essential to reproductive and overall women's health. Ovulation is the sign of health in women because it is the proof of sufficient hormone levels in the 9 essential hormones that influence women's health. FEMM teaches women to understand this information and the signs that this presents in their body. In this way, FEMM women are able to identify

abnormalities as they arise, seek health treatment when necessary, and ensure that their symptoms or complaints are not dismissed.

Many women experience signs of hormonal imbalances. They range from acne, to weight gain, depression, migraines, pain, irregular bleeding, and conditions such as polycystic ovarian syndrome. Many women are told that these symptoms are not important, or "just" psychological. They are told that irregular cycles are "normal" for them, and that these associated pains are simply the difficulty of being a woman. These symptoms can interfere with women and girls' education, work, and daily lives. We now have the science to understand that this is not true, and the ability to diagnose and treat the underlying cause of these symptoms and conditions. FEMM's innovative medical protocols are there to support women who identify these problems with doctors who can provide meaningful treatments at the root of the problem.

FEMM's medical management programmes train doctors to diagnose and treat reproductive health problems, with a holistic view of a woman's body that incorporates recent research on the complex hormonal interactions between different body systems. This interaction, and the delicacy of the hormonal activity in a woman's body, is essential to the experience of health in the entire female body. FEMM has developed innovative protocols that allow doctors to identify underlying problems with precision and treat them effectively. This medical support provides treatments that help women to live healthy lives.

FEMM lauds the targets and indicators related to reducing maternal mortality. However, the FEMM Foundation is concerned that the indicator for reproductive health is under women's empowerment. Separating women's reproductive health from the overall health goal obscures the relationship between reproductive health and overall health.

Additionally, whether a woman makes her own reproductive health decisions is extraordinarily subjective, especially as many are made within the context of relationships, such as in marriages or with parental guidance. These aspects will make the indicator extraordinarily difficult to measure, and as a result will undermine the value and usefulness of the data gathered. A woman's health care provider also influences a woman's care and decisions, making the doctor's ability to address these concerns comprehensively and based on the individual needs an important aspect of a woman's care. Moreover, inquiries related to these indicators may be culturally insensitive and inappropriate, disrespect women's privacy and make them feel like their values are not being taken into account.

However, there are ways to gather useful data that will not only help drive good policies but also empower women. FEMM recommends that the Commission focuses on women's health knowledge, assessing not whether a woman uses a particular method of family planning, but whether a woman understands how her body works. This will enable the Commission and Member States to provide targeted interventions which will empower women to be informed participants in their own health care so that they can make decisions on the basis of options, information and understanding. Women should recognize key signs of health, such as ovulation, and be able to identify when there is an abnormality so she can seek treatment. Doctors should also be able to diagnose and treat reproductive and endocrine disorders, making their training a measureable goal which FEMM is prepared to assist in reaching.

Policies and funding must reflect the needs and desires of women and what will actually work for women. This may involve examining education and preventive approaches to women's health care, such as FEMM. When women are educated through FEMM, they are empowered to make their own health-focused decisions, resulting in a healthier world. Healthy women are women who can participate in and contribute to their families and communities.

Women's full participation in society requires the investment in women's health and health education. It is well known that informed decisions lead to healthier decisions, and that women play a key role in family and community health outcomes. The knowledge gained through FEMM can allow women to identify underlying health concerns and to achieve or avoid pregnancy. When people attain the highest level of health they can, they are able to thrive and partake in their communities. Good data are key to understanding where the needs are and what interventions will be the most effective ones. The FEMM Foundation urges this Commission and Member States to ensure that the evidence base for the demographic analysis of women of reproductive age around the world focuses on knowledge so that these policies can foster empowerment through increased health knowledge. FEMM is prepared to address the needs of women through educational programmes and improved medical support.